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**The Current Status of Korean as a Heritage Language in the United
States: Learning Opportunities, Language Vitality, and Motivation**

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The Current Status of Korean as a Heritage Language in the United States: Learning Opportunities, Language Vitality, and Motivation

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Dedication

To all learners and educators of Korean language in the United States.

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Abstract

The Current Status of Korean as a Heritage Language in the United States: Learning Opportunities, Language Vitality, and Motivation

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American-born Korean-Americans show one of the highest rates of heritage language attrition among immigrant groups in the United States. This literature review aims to identify factors that influence Korean heritage learners' motivation to maintain or disengage from heritage language learning, particularly focusing on language learning settings, learning opportunities, and learners' experiences and perceptions about the language and learning. First, it reviews research that informs about the current status of Korean mainly as a heritage language in American K–16 schools where learner motivation and language learning are positioned. The second section explores the circumstances of Korean language use and exposure taking place in the Korean community setting. The third section explores the ways in which heritage language maintenance is influenced by Korean heritage learners' diverse experiences in association with the perceived language vitality, ethnic and linguistic identity formation, and individual differences in learning goals and backgrounds. On the basis of the literature review, the last section discusses the argument that the systemic relations of the K–16

education community, the Korean community, and individual learners are critical in understanding Korean heritage learners' involvement in language learning and development. Finally, this Report concludes with recommendations for the enhancement of learning opportunities and motivation for Korean learners and with suggestions for future research in the nascent field of Korean education and research in the United States.

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I. Introduction

Of the 364 languages spoken in the United States today, 176 are indigenous and 188 are immigrant languages (Lewis, 2009). Approximately 20% of the entire U.S. population over the age of five speaks a language other than English at home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The number of foreign-born individuals living in the country in 2010 was about 40 million, which represents approximately 13% of the total U.S. population, an increase of four times over that of 1900 (Tse, 2001b; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011a). While immigrants were mostly from Europe in the early 1900s, the majority of the immigrants today are from Latin America and Asia. The continuous increase in immigration over the last century and the resultant changes in demographic composition in the United States are not only changing the languages taught in schools, but they are also affecting the way we approach the teaching and learning of languages that have been traditionally thought of as foreign.

There are over one million Korean speakers in the United States, which ranks as the seventh-largest group among speakers of languages other than English.¹ As an immigrant language, the history of Korean language education is closely related to the history of Korean immigration in this country. H. Jo (1999) reports that, after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which abolished immigration quotas based on

¹ According to the 2005–2009 American community survey 5-year estimates (2010), the numbers of people over the age of five speaking languages other than English at home are as follows: Spanish or Spanish Creole (35,468,501); Chinese (2,600,150); Tagalog (1,513,734); French incl. Patois, Cajun (1,305,503); Vietnamese (1,251,468); German (1,109,216); Korean (1,039,021); Russian (881,723); Arabic (845,396); Italian (753,992); Portuguese or Portuguese Creole (731,282); French Creole (659,053); Polish (593,598); Hindi (560,983); Japanese (445,471); and Persian (396,769).

nationality, the Korean immigrant population made an unprecedented increase in the 1970s and 1980s, growing from only 15,050 in 1964 to 787,849 in 1990. According to the recent 2010 U.S. Census, the Korean population is 1,423,784, or 0.46% of the total U.S. population, an increase of 100 times compared to half a century ago (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b).² Such rapid growth in the Korean communities has also affected the incidence of Korean language education in the United States (see Table 1).

Table 1. The number of schools offering Korean classes in the United States, with enrollments in parentheses.

[Data: H. Sohn (2000), MLA (n.d.), K. Lee (2008), OKF (2010), and KLACUSA (2010)]

Year	Community Schools	Primary/Secondary	Higher Education
1975	7	0	8 (87)
1990	477 (30,173)	0	50 (1286)
2002	About 900	41 (3215)	91 (5211)
2009/2010	945 (50,509)	60	134 (8511)

Korean as a foreign language (KFL) education has made phenomenal strides during the past century, and Korean is now the third most common Asian language taught in U.S. schools, following Japanese and Chinese. Korean educators generally expect that the growth in Korean language programs will continue in the coming years (H. Cho, Y. Cho, & Kim-Renaud, 2008; H. Sohn, 2005). The literature on Korean education in the United States reports that this growth can be attributed to the increase in the Korean immigrant population, the efforts of the Korean government and communities to promote KFL education in the world, the security and economic importance of Korea to the United

² This Korean category includes people who indicated themselves as either “Korean” or “Korean-American” and excludes those who indicated being of more than one race.

States, the national prosperity of Korea in terms of its economic and global status, and so on (Byon, 2008; H. Sohn, 2005). However, the majority of Korean learners in the United States have been heritage learners, and Korean programs are still extremely unstable in offering sustained courses because of low enrollment.³ Korean language courses and programs are therefore vulnerable to cancellation and elimination in the American context.

Research on language use and the shift to the dominant language among the immigrant population has documented that the shift to complete English monolingualism occurs within three generations in a number of immigrant groups (Fishman, 1991; Krashen, 1998; Lopez, 1996; Rumbaut, 2009; S. Shin, 2005). Rumbaut (2009) describes the United States as the site for a “language graveyard” because heritage languages quickly “die” within a few generations at a relatively high rate compared to other countries, in spite of the massive influx of immigrants (p. 64). Among immigrants, Asian-Americans have the highest heritage language attrition rate such that only one in ten third-generation Asian-Americans is bilingual, whereas the number of bilingual third-generation Latinos is four times higher (Lopez, 1996). Surprisingly enough, a typical picture of Korean immigrant families consists of comparatively low assimilation among the first-generation immigrants and high heritage language attrition in the following generations. Lopez (1996) discovered that even in the highly multicultural area of Los

³ Benmamoun, Montrul, and Polinsky (2010) define heritage speakers in the following way: “Heritage speakers are early bilinguals who learned the second (majority) language in childhood, either simultaneously with the heritage language, or after a short period of predominant exposure to and use of the minority language at home . . . such that the heritage language becomes, structurally and functionally, the weaker language” (pp. 43–44).

Angeles, first-generation Koreans have the lowest English proficiency but that American-born ethnic Koreans have the lowest rate of speaking the heritage language at home among the five Asian immigrant groups: Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Filipinos, and Indians.

The considerably fast shift to English and the concomitant loss of the heritage language among Korean-Americans means more than the loss of the language alone. It is also a huge loss of national, community, and personal resources and a cause of intergenerational conflicts and communication issues among family members and larger ethnic communities (Au & Oh, 2009; Campbell & Rosenthal, 2000; G. Cho, 2000; G. Cho & Krashen, 1998; Cummins, 2005; M. Jo, 1999; Krashen, 1998; J. Lee & Shin, 2008; M. Lee, 2000a).

This Report aims to determine why learners start, continue, or stop studying Korean mainly as a heritage language in the United States. Since heritage learners simultaneously belong to the home and community where the language is actually used and to a mainstream society that exclusively uses English, the complicated relationships between language and society are more pronounced for heritage language learning. In this regard, Campbell and Christian state that research needs to explore “the ecology of languages” for heritage languages in particular (2000, p. 3). That is to say, the investigation of Korean as a heritage language in the United States warrants a macro look at the social context in which the individual’s language learning takes place.

With an aim of identifying factors that influence Korean learners’ motivation, this Report will particularly focus on extralinguistic factors such as learning settings and the

learners' experiences and perceptions about the language and learning as shaped and influenced by the learning environment. The following review and synthesis of the research literature is organized under three main subtopics: K–16 education, community education, and the experiences of individual learners.

The first section of this literature review draws a comprehensive picture of Korean education in primary, secondary, and tertiary schools in order to provide an understanding of its status within the larger landscape of foreign language education (FLE) in the United States. The aim of the analysis is to reveal information relevant to the overall characteristics of Korean education in K–16 schools in which learner motivation and language learning are positioned.

The following section explores the circumstances of Korean language use and exposure taking place in the community setting. The analysis should lead to the discovery of the critical role of communities including family, peers, and an array of diverse ethnic communities in learning Korean as a heritage language.

Based on the macro investigation of the two learning contexts, the last section of the literature review focuses on the status of Korean as a heritage language in the United States as it is perceived by the K–16 education community, the Korean community, and individual learners. That is, this review will help identify which factors impede or promote Korean language learning and how these factors are influenced by learning contexts.

On the basis of the review, I will propose a conceptual framework representing the dynamic and reciprocal relationships of three learning agents in the American context:

the K–16 education system, the Korean community, and the individual Korean learner. I will make the argument that the systemic relations of these three agents are critical and interrelated in understanding the unique characteristics of KFL education in the United States. Based on this framework, the remainder of this section maps out a set of recommendations for Korean teachers, researchers, and communities.

Since a macro look at the learning situations warrants reviewing a variety of research areas, the literature cited in this review is not confined to foreign language education but also includes ethnic studies, community psychology, and bilingual/heritage language education. As there is a paucity of comprehensive research into Korean education in the American context published especially for English-speaking audiences (Byon, 2008), it is anticipated that this integrative review of the most recent data and research literature will provide a macro-level picture of the current status of KFL education in the United States with respect to learner motivation. It is further hoped that this review will provoke further discussions on the role of Korean language education for both heritage and non-heritage learners as well as on ways to promote increased interest in the study of and course offerings in Korean. The ultimate goal for this Report is to bring together all the learning agents to discuss why and how the Korean language should be learned and taught in today's globalized world.

II. Korean Education in American K–16 Schools

HIGHER EDUCATION

Changes in Past Decades and Current Trends

According to several documentations of the history of Korean education in the United States (Byon, 2008; H. R. Cho, 2005; Kang, 2005), the first university to offer Korean as a foreign language (KFL) was Columbia University in 1934. By the end of the 1950s, approximately seven higher education institutions offered KFL courses.

A thorough search found no national-level surveys solely dedicated to the current state of Korean education in higher education. The Modern Language Association (MLA) surveys are probably the most comprehensive national-level investigations of foreign languages taught in U.S. colleges and universities. The survey of fall 2009 enrollments included 2,514 degree-granting institutions that provided courses in languages other than English, which represented 99.0% of all two-year and four-year institutions (Furman, Goldberg, & Lusin, 2010). The MLA website (MLA, n.d.) also provides a database on enrollments in both undergraduate and graduate courses in specific languages. Because of the thoroughness of the MLA survey, which has been conducted since 1958, it provides the most accurate and consistent baseline data for understanding the trends and changes in KFL education in the last decades.

Table 2 shows percentage changes of the 15 most commonly taught languages of the period. From 1970 to 2000, Korean showed phenomenal gains in enrollments, exhibiting the largest growth among all the languages except for American Sign Language (ASL) in the 1990s. In particular, the triple-digit gains between 1970 and 1980 and between 1980

and 1990 are noteworthy since several of the other languages registered losses during the same period. This growth is believed to be a direct result of the rapid growth in immigration after the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, which abolished immigration quotas based on nationality (J. Lee & Kim, 2008; J. Lee & Suarez, 2009; S. J. Shin, 2005). With the steady growth in enrollments, total enrollments in Korean courses in the fall semester of 2009 were 8,511 in 134 institutions, overtaking enrollments in Modern Hebrew and making Korean the fourteenth most commonly taught language in the United States (see Table 3). The increase of 19.1% from the previous survey is again larger than the increase of total enrollments by 6.6%, which is the second-largest growth following Arabic.

Table 2. Percentage changes in language enrollments between MLA surveys (adopted from Furman et al., 2010, p. 25). ¹Modern and Biblical Hebrew combined.

	1960–70	1970–80	1980–90	1990–95	1995–98	1998–2002	2002–06	2006–09
Spanish	117.8	–2.5	40.7	13.5	8.3	13.7	10.3	5.1
French	57.0	–30.9	9.7	–24.6	–3.1	1.5	2.2	4.8
German	38.6	–37.3	5.1	–27.8	–7.5	2.3	3.5	2.2
ASL	–	–	–	168.7	165.3	432.2	29.7	16.4
Italian	207.3	1.6	42.9	–11.9	12.6	29.6	22.6	3.0
Japanese	279.2	73.8	297.3	–2.2	–3.5	21.1	27.5	10.3
Chinese	238.3	82.2	71.5	35.8	7.5	20.0	51.0	18.2
Arabic	146.4	160.0	0.3	27.9	23.9	92.3	126.5	46.3
Russian	18.4	–33.7	86.0	–44.6	–3.8	0.5	3.9	8.2
Hebrew ¹	332.1	17.3	–33.1	1.0	20.6	44.0	4.2	–7.2
Portuguese	390.3	–3.4	26.9	5.2	6.0	21.1	22.4	10.8
Korean	–39.9	270.3	511.2	46.2	34.0	16.3	37.1	19.1
Total	74.9	–18.2	30.2	–4.1	5.0	16.6	12.7	6.7

In addition, when considering enrollments in four-year colleges and graduate schools, Korean was one of the three languages, along with Spanish and ASL, that

showed growth at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Although language courses have had increased enrollments in past decades, it should also be noted that the ratio of enrollments in foreign languages to the entire postsecondary enrollments in 2009 is almost half of that in 1960 (Furman et al., 2010, p. 18). Furman et al. (2010) postulate that this may be because the nature and length of language requirements have also decreased in past decades. In consideration of this general trend in FLE, the steady growth of Korean enrollments is more remarkable.

Table 3. The most studied languages on college campuses in Fall 2009 and changes in language enrollments since 2006 (adapted from Furman et al., 2010, p. 19)

Most Commonly Taught Languages and Enrollments in 2009	Percentage Change between 2006 and 2009	Percentage of Total	Cumulative Percentage	
1. Spanish	864,986	+ 5.1%	51.4%	51.4%
2. French	216,419	+ 4.8%	12.9%	64.3%
3. German	96,349	+ 2.2%	5.7%	70%
4. ASL	91,763	+ 16.4%	5.5%	75.5%
5. Italian	80,752	+ 3.0%	4.8%	80.3%
6. Japanese	73,434	+ 10.3%	4.4%	84.7%
7. Chinese	60,976	+ 18.2%	3.6%	88.3%
8. Arabic	35,083	+ 46.3%	2.1%	90.4%
9. Latin	32,606	+ 1.3%	1.9%	92.3%
10. Russian	26,883	+ 8.2%	1.6%	93.9%
11. Ancient Greek	20,695	- 9.4%	1.2%	95.1%
12. Biblical Hebrew	13,807	- 2.4%	0.8%	95.9%
13. Portuguese	11,371	+ 10.8%	0.7%	96.6%
14. Korean	8,511	+ 19.1%	0.5%	97.1%
15. Modern Hebrew	8,245	- 14.2%	0.5%	97.6%
16. Other Languages	40,747	+20.8%	2.4%	100%
Total	1,682,627	+6.6%	100%	

State-Level Variability in Korean Enrollments

In spite of this expansion, a close examination of Korean enrollments by state reveals significant institutional variability in terms of learning accessibility.⁴ According to the MLA enrollment database (MLA, n.d.), 16 states reported zero enrollments in Korean courses.⁵ Even among the 35 states reporting Korean enrollments, Korean education is highly concentrated in only a limited number of states. California makes up about 31% of the entire enrollment, and the next highest state is New York with only 10% of the total, followed by Hawaii, Georgia, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. These six states, representing about 60% of the total, are located on the East and West Coasts, where large Korean ethnic communities are established. The other 29 states share the remaining 40%. Although Texas is the second-largest state by total student population, it is only the seventh largest in Korean enrollments. Such institutions as the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, the University of California at San Diego, and the University of California at Los Angeles have the largest enrollments, and these areas are known for having large Korean communities.

In an attempt to understand the disparity of Korean enrollments in the broader context of FLE in the United States, I will first compare the three most prominent East Asian languages—Japanese, Chinese, and Korean—in terms of their enrollment patterns by state. The reason for this comparison is that it is quite often observed that there is high competition for students among these three languages, which are often housed under the

⁴ Data for the District of Columbia is given in each dataset that I analyze in this Report. Therefore, it is regarded as a state only for the purpose of my analysis.

⁵ I regard the 16 states with no information about enrollments in the MLA database as having zero enrollments in this analysis.

same academic department in an institution (K. Lee, 2008). In addition, the languages share many historical, geographical, and linguistic commonalities. Next, I compare these three languages with more commonly taught languages such as Spanish and French and also other less commonly taught languages with lower enrollments such as Vietnamese, Hmong, and Filipino.⁶

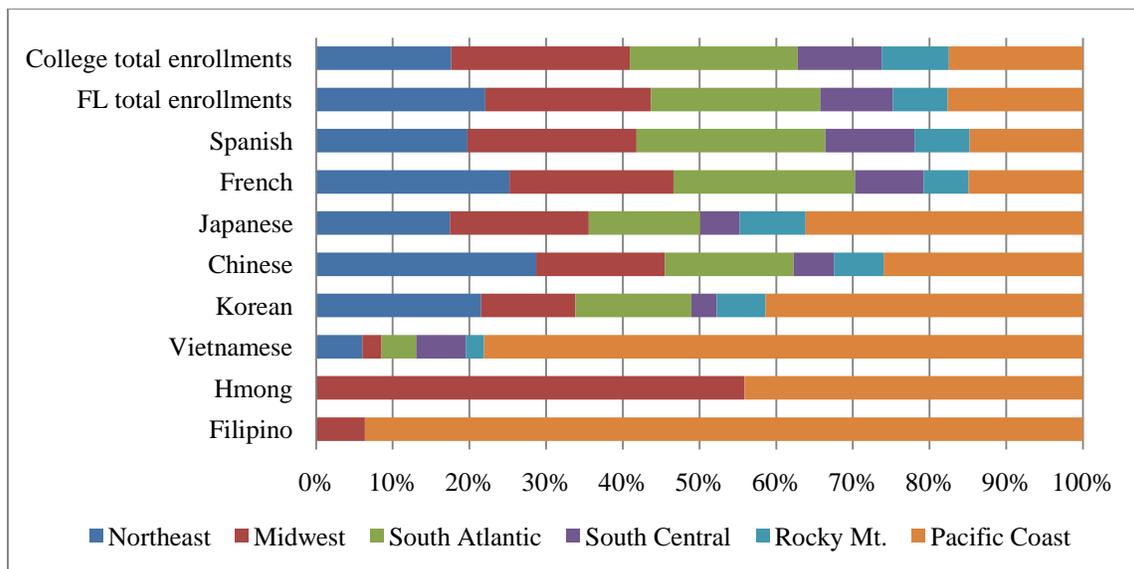


Figure 1. Geographic distribution of enrollments (Data: National Center for Education Statistics and MLA)

In order to explore the geographic distribution of the enrollments, I recategorized the 51 states into six regions based on the classifications used in the MLA report (Furman et al., 2010, p. 22) and then calculated the sum of enrollments by region for the three East Asian languages, Spanish, and French. In an attempt to look at the geographic

⁶ Furman et al. (2010) states that the MLA survey maintains language distinctions as in Chinese, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Classical Chinese for Chinese languages and as in Filipino, Pilipino, and Tagalog for languages used in the Philippines in order to acknowledge social and linguistic differences among the languages. I chose Chinese and Filipino only for the purpose of the analysis in this Report.

distributions in relation to the distribution of total student population, I also accordingly reanalyzed total enrollments in languages other than English in 2009 (MLA, n.d.) and total enrollments in U.S. colleges and universities in 2008 as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; Digest of Education Statistics, 2011). Several patterns found by this analysis are shown in Figure 1. The two languages with the largest enrollments, Spanish and French, roughly follow the geographic distributions of the total college enrollments and the total enrollments in foreign languages. However, the three East Asian languages show patterns diverging from the total student distribution with concentrations in a few regions. Yet the lack of Korean enrollments is found less frequently in the other two languages. While 16 states reported no enrollment in Korean courses, only two states for Japanese and one state for Chinese courses had no enrollment (see Table 4).

Table 4. The number of states showing enrollments and no enrollment (Data: MLA)

	Japanese	Chinese	Korean
States that reported enrollment	49	50	35
States that reported no enrollment	2	1	16

Figure 1 also illustrates the distributions of enrollments in Vietnamese, Hmong, and Filipino. The lower their enrollments, the more they become idiosyncratic with uneven concentrations rather than following the total enrollment distribution. It seems that these irregular patterns are probably attributable to the dependency of the less commonly taught languages on local demographic realities. As stated earlier, the concentration of

Korean enrollments in the Northeast and Pacific regions seems highly associated with the local Korean populations there. As seen in Figure 2, the Korean enrollment distribution closely approximates that of the Korean ethnic population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b).⁷

In sum, only 134 of the total 2,514 higher education institutions in the United States offer Korean courses. That is to say, only those students in 5% of schools are given an option to study Korean. Clearly, the discrepancy in Korean language courses between states and institutions can be an obstacle to providing equal learning opportunities to potential learners.

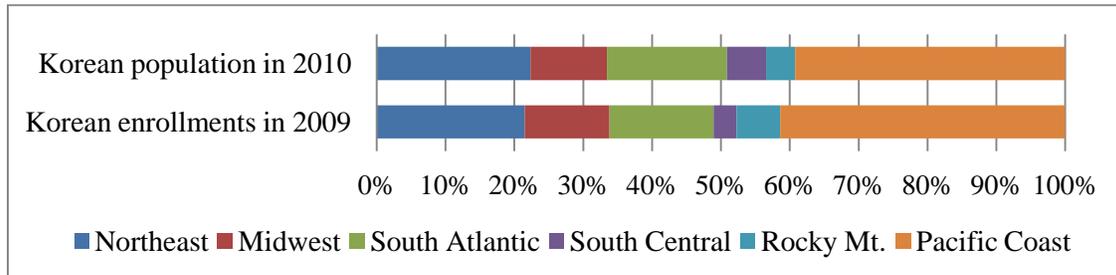


Figure 2. Geographic distributions of the Korean population and Korean enrollments (Data: U.S. Census and MLA)

Prominent Presence of Heritage Learners

The 2006 and 2009 MLA surveys collected information about introductory-level (i.e., first- and second-year language courses) and advanced-level (i.e., third- and fourth-year language courses) enrollments in undergraduate courses (Furman et al., 2010). The surveys indicated a unique situation with respect to Korean in terms of the ratio of the two levels. Except for Biblical Hebrew, Korean had the highest proportion of advanced-

⁷ As of October 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau has not yet released the most recent data on the number of speakers of Korean at home by state, so here I use the data on Korean population by state in 2010.

level courses, representing about one third of the total undergraduate enrollments in Korean in 2009.⁸ Between 2006 and 2009, the enrollments in advanced-level Korean courses in four-year institutions increased from 1,393 to 2,807, while the enrollments in introductory-level courses increased from 4,294 to 4,998. Thus, the relatively larger increase in advanced Korean courses changed the ratio of introductory to advanced courses from 3:1 to 2:1 between the two MLA surveys.

As for the ratio differences among the top 15 languages, Furman et al. (2010) suggest several possible factors. They state that there are “issues such as national and local interest, funding, and materials availability, and individual program strength” (p. 7) that explain the ratio differences. In addition, they also point out that introductory courses generally reflect degree requirements, that advanced courses are more aligned with language minors or majors, and that a high proportion of upper-level enrollments might reflect the strong interest of heritage learners. No documented empirical foundation was found in the research for this review that can explain the recent phenomenon of the growth of advanced-level Korean courses and the concomitant growth in graduate course enrollments as explained in the previous section. However, in alignment with the possible factors suggested in the MLA report, I postulate that there are two possible explanations for the growth of upper-level courses: 1) a strong presence of heritage learners in Korean courses, and 2) institutional and national demands promoting professional-level Korean speakers.

⁸ Table 7c in the MLA report (Furman et al., 2010, p. 28) provides the ratios of introductory- to advanced-level courses in four-year institutions: Spanish (3:1), French (3:1), German (4:1), Italian (8:1), Japanese (3:1), Chinese (3:1), ASL (4:1), Latin (6:1), Arabic (5:1), Russian (3:1), Ancient Greek (4:1), Portuguese (5:2), Biblical Hebrew (4:3), Modern Hebrew (4:1), Korean (2:1), Other Languages (4:1), and Total (7:2).

Korean educators and researchers have observed that one unique phenomenon of Korean classes in the United States is the dominant presence of heritage learners, and this trend becomes more noticeable in intermediate and advanced levels (H. R. Cho, 2005; E. Kim, 2005, 2006; H. Sohn, 2005). Although I found no study devoted solely to examining the number of heritage learners (HLs) and non-heritage learners (NHLs) of Korean, information reported in larger studies on the HL ratio in Korean classes contributes to an estimated picture of a typical Korean classroom at the university level. In Kang's (2005) survey of Korean instructors in U.S. colleges and universities, the percentage of HLs in Korean classes in eight institutions typically fell between 70% and 80%.⁹ Other studies that have documented the number of HLs and NHLs found a similar pattern with a tendency of higher proportions of HLs in higher levels (Byon, 2008; Jeon, 2008; C. Lee, 2000; Reynolds, Howard, & Deak, 2009; H. Sohn, 2000; S. Sohn, 2001; You, 2001; Yu, 2008). Even though the number of NHLs of Korean has reportedly been increasing in recent years (Byon, 2008; Kang, 2005; E. Kim, 2006), it is expected that more HLs are enrolled in Korean courses in higher education with variations owing to regional and institutional settings. Moreover, King (1998) points out that this predominance of HLs is found less frequently in Chinese and Japanese language courses. For example, Yang's (2003) study on HLs and NHLs studying East Asian languages reported that the majority of Korean-learning participants were heritage learners (74%), whereas there were many fewer HLs in Chinese (41%) and in Japanese (11%).

⁹ Brigham Young University is an exception, where HLs make up only 10% mostly due to the fact that the institution is primarily dedicated to educating missionaries.

The significant presence of Korean HLs can be primarily an outcome of the increase in speakers of the language in Korean communities owing to massive immigration and, as a result, the increase in college-age Korean-Americans (Carreira & Kagan, 2011; J. Lee & Kim, 2008). In addition, the high proportion of HLs indirectly confirms that Korean enrollments are greatly affected by local communities speaking the language. Likewise, the strong interest of HLs' in Korean language learning seems to influence the relatively high increase in advanced-courses in Korean in that they need instruction in more advanced-level Korean.¹⁰

Another possible explanation for the increase in advanced class offerings in Korean is the current national demand for highly developed foreign language speakers. The National Flagship Initiative of the National Security Education Program was first designed in 2002 to produce professional-level speakers, and Korean was selected as one of eight less commonly taught languages critical to U.S. national security and economy. Since then, two Korean programs—one at the University of California at Los Angeles and one at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa—have been providing advanced-level and content-based instruction on Korean-related subjects. Because of the interlinguistic difficulty of Korean for NHLs, many Korean educators have pointed out the language potentials of Korean HLs for reaching the “professional” proficiency required of relevant

¹⁰ However, it should also be noted that some HLs need introductory-level instruction because of their non-standard language varieties and their partial learning of the heritage language in terms of literacy skills, vocabulary, grammar, and so on, and that simply placing HLs in advanced courses results in their “failure” in the courses (King, 1998; J. Lee and Suarez, 2009; Reynolds et al, 2009).

U.S. government personnel (D. Lee, 2003; Schleicher & Everson, 2006; H. Sohn, 2009; Yu, 2008).¹¹

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

There have been two major sources of national surveys of FLE in U.S. K–12 schools: surveys of enrollments in public schools conducted by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) since 1968 and surveys of both private and public schools conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) since 1987. A brief summary of the recent findings of these surveys is useful in that negative trends found nationally in FLE in general are often magnified in less commonly taught languages. Although both surveys targeted the 2007–2008 school year, the data collection methodologies and targeting issues differed (ACTFL, 2010; Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011; Rhodes & Pufahl, 2010). The ACTFL project team contacted state foreign language education supervisors to gather data on student enrollments. The CAL project team sent a survey questionnaire to school principals and language teachers in 5,000 randomly selected schools, and the survey focused on the amount of foreign language instruction, program type and curriculum, teacher qualification, and the effects of educational reform on FLE.

Both surveys found similar trends with those found in higher education. Spanish, as the dominant language, made up about 72% of the total enrollment and was taught in

¹¹ In connection with the role of Korean language in U.S. national security, Byon (2008) states that “the presence of North Korea as a communist regime has threatened the US government’s interests and prompted it to further expand the KFL programmes of the government institutes,” (p. 249) such as the Defense Language Institute and Foreign Service Institute. See Kang (2005) for more information on government institutions that have provided intensive language training in Korean for U.S. government personnel.

about 90% of the schools. Chinese reportedly had the greatest increase in recent years, with other non-European less commonly taught languages following. The ACTFL project reported an increase in the total enrollment in foreign language classes from the previous survey for the 2004–2005 year. However, the CAL survey found such negative trends as 1) a significant decrease in the percentage of elementary and middle schools offering FLE from a decade ago; 2) unequal access to FLE based on school type, urbanicity, grade levels, and student socioeconomic status; 3) a shortage of qualified teachers; and 4) negative effects of the No Child Left Behind Act on FLE. Two negative trends were also reported in both surveys: only 18.5% of K–12 students were enrolled in foreign language courses, a relatively low number compared to those of other countries, and fewer foreign language courses were offered in the early grades compared to the large concentration of foreign language courses in the high school grades.

The two surveys have limitations regarding the completeness of information since they are based on sample responses. 17 states did not provide 2007–2008 data for the ACTFL project, so estimates for those states had to be calculated. The CAL project was also based on a sample; thus, the statistical results are only estimates subject to sampling and reporting errors. These methodological issues make it especially difficult to extrapolate data specific to a minority subset such as Korean. In this sense, Rhodes and Pufahl point out that “those languages taught by fewer than 6% of schools have a larger range of error because of the small *ns* so those data are not as accurate as those for the languages represented by higher percentages” (2010, p. 32).

That having been noted, the concentration of enrollment in only a limited number of major languages at the K–12 level is more pronounced than the variability in enrollments in higher education. According to the 2007–08 ACTFL survey (2010, pp. 8–10), the seven most commonly taught languages make up almost 94.5% of the entire enrollments, whereas these same languages represent only 81.5% of the totals in higher education.¹² The other less commonly taught languages, including Korean, share the remaining 5.5%, with Korean making up only 0.03% of the total K–12 enrollment in foreign language courses. The total enrollments in Korean are 2,833, which are reported by only four states. The CAL survey estimates that Korean is taught by 0.2% of total elementary schools and 0.4% of total secondary schools (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2010, pp. 31–36). In sum, with the increased dominance of only a few foreign languages in K–12 FLE, students in primary and secondary schools have much less accessibility to less commonly taught languages, including Korean. Compared to Korean education in higher education institutions, representing 0.5% of the total enrollments and 5% of the total institutions, the representation of Korean education at the K–12 level is at present minuscule and the growth is slow.

According to N. Kim (2003), Korean instruction in U.S. public schools first started in the 1970s in Los Angeles and New York as part of bilingual education programs. K. Lee (2008) reported that there were 19 schools offering Korean classes with an enrollment of 1,471 in 1997 and 65 schools with an enrollment of 5,251 in 2006. A

¹² The languages with the largest enrollments in K-12 public schools in 2007-08 were Spanish (72.06%), French (14.08%), Other (5.49%), German (4.43%), Latin (2.30%), Japanese (0.82%), Chinese (0.67%), and Russian (0.14%).

decrease in the number of schools between 2006 and 2010 is found in data provided by the Foundation for Korean Language and Culture in the USA (KLACUSA, 2010).¹³ This study reports that as of November 2010, a total of 60 schools in only 10 states were teaching Korean, with 41 of the 60 schools located in California, 10 schools in New York, 2 schools in Washington, and 1 school in each of the following states: Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, and Virginia. As is the case at the university level, 85% of the schools are located in only two states: California and New York. Based on the MLA geographic categorization, there is no school offering Korean in the South Central or Rocky Mountain regions. In addition, as in higher education, the majority of Korean learners at the K–12 level are heritage learners (N. Kim, 2003).

However, some positive recent trends indicate steady and continuous growth of Korean education at the K–12 level. Just as the researchers of the CAL survey interpreted the increase of immersion schools as a positive trend in promoting high levels of foreign language proficiency (Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011; Rhodes & Pufahl, 2010), a number of Korean immersion programs have been established. Among a total of 398 Two-Way Immersion (TWI) programs in the United States as of September 2011, according to the directory of TWI programs (CAL, 2011), there are five Korean/English TWI programs in California and one in New York. Jeon (2003) reports that the first elementary TWI programs began in the early 1990s and the first secondary TWI programs started in the late 1990s. Korean educators have commented on the potential and benefits of TWI programs as one of the most desirable types of immersion program in teaching Korean as

¹³ KLACUSA provided the data via email.

a minority language in the American context (Ha, 2001; Jeon, 2003). Indeed, several studies found that students who participated in Korean/English TWI programs were capable of remarkable academic achievement. A study by S. Sohn et al. (1999, as cited in H. Sohn, 2000) compared Korean-American students in three types of elementary school immersion programs: total English immersion programs, modified bilingual programs, and Korean/English TWI programs. They found that students in the TWI programs outperformed those in the other two programs in both Korean and English achievement as well as in other subject areas. The success of the Cahuenga School in Los Angeles as the first Korean/English TWI program has also been documented. This school has been recognized as a successful one by both the California Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Education because its students have consistently outperformed their English monolingual peers in English and other subjects (Gold, 2006; Merrill, 2002, as cited in Lee and Shin, 2008; Steel, Oishi, O'Connor, & Silva, 2009). Although these Korean/English TWI programs have contributed to Korean learning, it should also be noted that they are available to only a limited number of students.

Korean was adopted as the ninth foreign language for the College Board's SAT II in 1997 and has grown strongly since then. The number of examinees who took the SAT Korean was 2,539 in 1997, and it increased to 4,687 by 2005 (S. Cho, Chung, & Peterson, 2006). Unfortunately, however, Korean is not yet included in Advanced Placement testing despite the efforts of a number of Korean language organizations and communities. The CAL survey found that enrollment in AP classes of other foreign languages increased significantly, from 12% in 1987 to 21% in 2008 (Rhodes & Pufahl,

2010), and incorporating the Korean language into standardized testing programs should create a synergizing effect in promoting its study by pre-college students.

LEARNING AVAILABILITY IN K–16 SCHOOLS

Finn (1998) investigated institutional variability in foreign language education between and within 340 American high schools and found that engagement and achievement in foreign language study were shaped by class offerings and school policies such as graduation requirements and tracking. Finn states that foreign language learning is “characterized by a high degree of *variability*” (1998, p. 288) in that great variations exist in learning opportunities and student engagement in FLE across states, districts, and schools. The variability in class offerings between K–16 grade levels can also be problematic because it may hinder the early and sustained FLE needed to attain high levels of proficiency (ACTFL, 2010; Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011; S. J. Shin, 2006; H. Sohn, 2005). Indeed, Sung, Padilla, and Silva’s (2006) survey found that when a foreign language had been introduced in middle school, more students studied foreign languages in high school and attained higher proficiency levels. The outcome of the variability in class offerings between schools and grade levels is that learners have unequal access to learning opportunities and resources.

In the particular context of KFL in the United States, Korean heritage learners (HLs) and Korean communities have also recognized that Korean course offerings in K–16 schools have been limited. Approximately 85% of the collegiate Korean HLs who participated in two studies responded that they wanted to see Korean courses in early grades (J. Lee, 2002; J. Lee & Kim, 2008), and this desire was found to be stronger

among HLs than NHLs (Reynolds, Howard, & Deak, 2009). Also, 80% of Korean parents wanted Korean classes to be offered in K–12 public schools (S. J. Shin, 2005). As for more Korean learning opportunities in U.S. higher education institutions, J. Lee and Shin state that Korean is “typically offered formally for the first time at the university level” (2008, p. 8). However, it is available only to a limited number of college students. In other words, learning Korean is limited to a relatively small number of students because Korean courses are offered in only 5% of higher education institutions and in less than 0.5% of primary and secondary schools in the United States.

Another problem derived from institutional variability in the availability of Korean is the issue of curriculum articulation between schools and course levels. Curriculum articulation involves “ensuring continuity in language study from one level of schooling to the next” (Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011, pp. 266–267). When curriculum articulation is not carefully considered, a student is continually placed into an introductory level when moving to another school or grade level and repeats studying what he or she has already learned in a previous class. For example, a Korean student at a university in Ohio, who had transferred from a university in California, had a problem finding an appropriate class because what was being taught in an advanced-level Korean class at the Ohio institution was material he had already studied in an intermediate-level Korean class in California (E. Kim, 2005).

My analysis of American K–16 schools through the large-scale surveys and related body of research has revealed the scant representation of Korean education in K–16 schools, a problem that is magnified by its uneven distribution by state and grade level.

The variability in Korean class offerings in K–16 schools is also related to its close affinity to the Korean community, which is in turn demonstrated by the dominant presence of HLs in Korean classes. The next section explores the important role of the Korean community for Korean learners in the U.S. context.

III. Korean Education in the Korean Community

THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY IN MAINTAINING KOREAN AS A HERITAGE LANGUAGE

Korean education, especially for HLs, does not receive enough attention from the mainstream public in the United States and is generally left up to individual families and communities (J. Lee & Shin, 2008; Wiley & Valdes, 2000). That is to say, Korean HLs are affiliated with the Korean community in which the language exists, and the community serves as an informal learning setting for the learners. Korean as a heritage language introduces particular issues related to language maintenance and loss for which the ethnic community plays an important role.

Considering that minority languages are extremely vulnerable to the macropolicies and trends of mainstream society, Wiley emphasizes the critical role of community in promoting heritage languages, arguing that “the best strategy is to use government policies to promote heritage languages during favorable times and to rely on community-based efforts over the long term” (2001, p. 106). Actually, there is a large amount of literature that stresses the importance of the role of immediate communities in heritage language maintenance and in development for the following reasons: what U.S. K–16 schools can teach in a formal setting is limited (King, 1998; Wang & Green, 2001); that KFL education is extremely vulnerable to accountability and testing in K–16 schools (S. J. Shin, 2006); that there is a limited market for low-status, less commonly taught languages (Gambhir, 2001); that communication with family and community is essential to provide emotional, social, and moral support for immigrant communities (G. Cho, K. Cho, & Tse, 1997; G. Cho & Krashen, 1998); and, that intergenerational transmission of

language is possible only through intimate interactions between family and community members (Fishman, 1991; S. J. Shin, 2005).

In this sense, scholars recommend that community-based learning and teaching should be incorporated into the formal foreign language classroom, which is possible in a highly multilingual society like that of the United States. With this community-based approach, language instruction is built up around the students' ethnic communities and experiences and becomes resourceful, with authentic language use and materials in a variety of contexts (Carreira & Kagan, 2011; Overfield, 1997).

In particular, the community-based learning of a heritage language is generally made possible through the clustering of ethnic populations. Although partially responsible for the institutional variability of heritage language course offerings, the clustering can in fact produce other positive effects on heritage language maintenance. The research literature has indicated that, if combined with high familial socioeconomic status, a high concentration of speakers of a heritage language produces an optimal learning environment to foster heritage language maintenance (J. Lee & Suarez, 2009).

Korean researchers have also identified benefits of a cohesive Korean population concentration for Korean language maintenance. For example, S. C. Shin (2008a) states that in order to foster more Korean offerings in public schools, "it is practically and strategically advantageous to channel the effort into 'planting' Korean in geographical areas where Korean is already being taught or has particular social and economic relevance" (p. 6). He presents a case study of clustering schools teaching Korean in an area, albeit in Australia, in which students receive appropriately articulated instruction

throughout various school years (2008b). Similar clustering of a Korean ethnic population and culture can be found in metropolitan areas in the United States where large Korean ethnic communities are located, and this can be beneficial for articulated and sustained access to language learning resources and efforts. For example, Lopez describes the Los Angeles area as “thriving” with Korean ethnic language press, newspapers, TV, and radio, providing an enormous amount of language resources and exposure (1996, p. 145).

In order to further understand the social nature of Korean language learning and development, we should look more closely at how the language learning is situated in the midst of the HLs’ social and cultural relations in their ethnic communities. In the same regard, J. Lee and Suarez state that “heritage language is more than a communication system for these children; it is a symbolic representation of their identities, social relations and their culture” (2009, p. 160). Korean communities range from the immediate family to the neighborhood, peers, local community, and even unseen metaphorical communities among ethnic Koreans throughout the world. The following sections explore more deeply the diverse types of learning settings in the community in order to discover how a broad range of activities as well as social relations are involved in the use and development of Korean as a community language.

KOREAN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

One systemic learning setting that the Korean community provides is community schools, which have importance in disseminating roles and values, as recognized by K. Lee (2008). According to H. Sohn (2005), by the mid-1970s, there were only two

community schools for the Korean language in the United States. With the implementation of a Korean governmental act on education for overseas Koreans in 1977, strong efforts to establish community schools and KFL education in public schools got underway in the following decades (H. R. Cho, 2005). According to the Overseas Koreans Foundation's report (2010), as of November 2010, there were 8,750 teachers and 50,509 students in 945 Korean community schools in the United States.¹⁴ Whereas 16 states do not offer Korean courses in higher education and 41 states do not offer Korean courses in K–12 schools, Vermont is the only state that lists no Korean community school in the report. The sizes of the community schools vary greatly, ranging from as small as 3 students to as large as 520 students. Therefore, it can be said that the community schools have offered Korean learning opportunities in place of K–16 education by being located in almost every Korean community.

The strong affiliation of the Korean community schools with Korean communities is also indicated by the fact that the geographic distribution of students in the community schools roughly approximates the distribution of the Korean population. As seen in Figure 3 (ACTFL, 2010; Digest of Education Statistics, 2010; Overseas Koreans Foundation, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b), foreign language enrollments in U.S. primary and secondary schools are distributed in proportion to the distribution of the U.S. school-aged population with only slight regional variations. However, Korean learners in

¹⁴ In the original report that gives a list of Korean community schools in the United States, I found that those in Alaska were reported twice—once each by two offices in Seattle and Anchorage—so the second data has been excluded from the analysis. Two schools in Guam and Saipan were also excluded so that the analysis would be consistent in its comparison of the 50 states and the District of Columbia throughout this Report. Therefore, the total numbers reported here are different from those in the original document.

the Korean community schools are concentrated in the Pacific Coast region, with relatively fewer students in the Midwest, South Central, and Rocky Mountain areas. This pattern is in accordance with the Korean population concentrations in the United States.

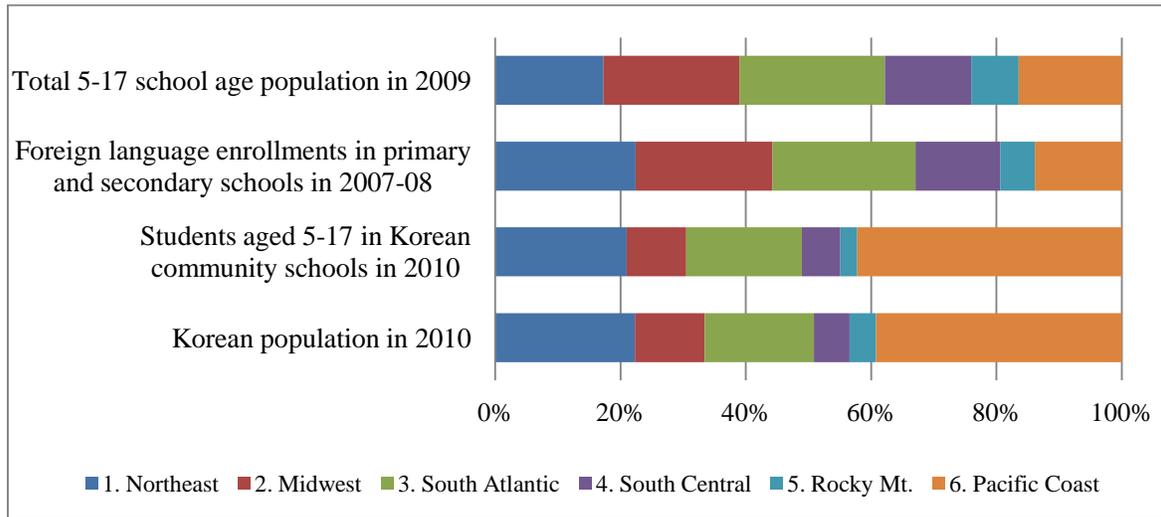


Figure 3. Geographic distribution of students in Korean community schools in the United States (Data: NCES, ACTFL, Overseas Koreans Foundation, and U.S. Census)

Another particular feature of Korean community schools is that about 90% of them are affiliated with Korean ethnic churches or Korean cultural associations (H. Sohn, 2000), where it is not easy for NHLs to enroll. As a result, according to three reports on the current state of Korean community schools conducted by three Korean government offices for Korean education in the United States (KECDC, 2009; KECLA, 2010; KECNY, 2010), about 95% of the students in the schools are heritage learners.

Although the curriculum varies from school to school, the Korean community schools typically offer classes on the weekend. Usually, students study the Korean

language for one or two hours and then also learn about Korean culture through various types of martial arts, history, art, music, and dance classes (Byon, 2008; M. Kim, 2001). Heritage speakers' language use is typically based on oral communication with family and community members, and Korean community schools have played a pivotal role in teaching literacy skills and diverse registers of the language to Korean HLs. High participation in community schools among Korean heritage students is also well documented. In a recent national-level survey that aimed to determine general profiles of HLs, Carreira and Kagan (2011) found that Korean HLs reported the highest rates of participation in community schools at 72.3% and in community events at 50.4% among seven HL groups that participated in the survey: Spanish, Mandarin/Cantonese, Russian, Korean, Vietnamese, Tagalog, and Persian.

FAMILY AND RELATIVES

Family is the most immediate and critical community in which the use of the mother tongue occurs for the purpose of intergenerational intimacy and communication, and Fishman argues that the mother tongue cannot be learned without “this intimate, affect-related and societal binding arena” (1991, p. 373). Carreira and Kagan's (2011) literature review found that children who spoke only a heritage language at home had higher proficiency in the language than those children who spoke both the heritage language and English or English only at home. Family relations and parents have also been found to have a strong influence on heritage language use. Tseng and Fuligini (2000) conducted a study of family relationships and language use in over 600 immigrant families in the United States. They ranked the children of these families in terms of family cohesion and

mutual communication and found the following: adolescents who mutually spoke the native language with parents exhibited the highest levels of both variables, those who mutually spoke English followed, and those who responded in English to heritage-language-speaking parents scored the lowest. Notably, these findings were consistent throughout different ethnic groups. These researchers also found that language shifts, either from the native language to English or from English to the native language, occurred less frequently in families with strong cohesive relationships and with communication styles that involved the use of the same language over a two-year period. Similarly, Kondo-Brown's (2001) survey of Japanese heritage learners from two proficiency levels revealed a notable finding. The mother's language choices and encouragement were the most critical contributors to heritage learners' language behaviors and proficiency. Kondo-Brown concluded that natural settings for language learning are a prerequisite to high proficiency development.

Because a few hours per week of classroom language study is likely not sufficient for promoting high levels of proficiency, Korean educators have also recognized the critical role of familial communication in Korean since it provides important opportunities for language use and exposure (D. Lee, 2000; M. Lee, 2000a). Several studies have found that the amount of language input and use in the home is one of the strongest factors influencing heritage language maintenance. G. Cho and Krashen (2000) found four input-related factors connected with the home environment that predicted heritage language proficiency: parental use of the language, trips to Korea, watching Korean language TV programs, and reading in Korean. A study by M. Lee (2000) on

vocabulary acquisition of Korean bilingual children also found that the amount of daily exposure to the language in the home was strongly related to vocabulary development, especially Korean honorific- and family-related vocabulary. Also, more parental involvement for Korean language maintenance and stronger family cohesion were found among students with a higher level of proficiency in Korean (E. Kim, 2006; I. Park, 2007). In sum, it seems that parents and the home environment are two of the most important sources of language input and encouragement for immigrant children.

In addition, some studies explored the role of grandparents in transmitting intergenerational and pragmatic linguistic features to Korean children. Grandparents, who are often the first generation in immigrant families, have a limited command of English and are highly likely to speak the heritage language alone. Jeon's (2008) ethnographic study found that the presence of grandparents greatly enhanced children's exposure to the language. E. Park (2006) confirmed that grandparents were excellent resources for both linguistic and cultural transmission and maintenance for preschool age children and found that parents expected grandparents to teach language and culture to their children. Indeed, it appears that there are some sociolinguistic features that can be acquired only through sustained intergenerational interactions such as linguistic pragmatics marking Korean-specific politeness and face-saving culture: for example, particular verb endings in Korean mark status relationships between interlocutors (E. Park, 2008).

PEER AND COMMUNITY

One typical profile of heritage learners is that they overwhelmingly use English with peers but favor using the heritage language with parents (Carreira & Kagan, 2011).

However, to maintain relationships with ethnic peers and communities in particular, communicative competence in the heritage language is critical, and social interactions with ethnic community members are in turn important in the creation of opportunities to use and maintain the language.

In a study of U.S. native bilinguals who have maintained high levels of literacy in both English and their heritage languages, Tse (2001a) found that all of the participants had support from a peer group, K-16 institutions, and parents, and that a peer group that valued the heritage language was the most critical of these support systems. That is, a strong membership in an ethnic peer group exerted an equal or greater influence than parental support for biliteracy development. A similar study of two high school students who are highly biliterate in English and Korean revealed the importance of a peer community in developing high literacy in Korean, especially through online networks (Yi, 2008). That is, their voluntary writing practices on the Internet helped them socialize with their ethnic peers and social youth networks, pursue their personal interests in Korean popular culture, and maintain their ethnic attachments and ties to the home country.

As shown in Yi's (2008) study, online space creates another type of peer community. The promise of online space creating language support and transcending physical restrictions holds significant potential for heritage language maintenance. For example, J. Lee's (2006) study of two college students with respect to their online literacy practices in Korean examined how leniency toward non-standard language use allowed by online communication provided more authentic opportunities to use the

language, to develop social networks with Korean ethnic groups, and ultimately, to create greater sociopsychological attachments to Korean language and culture.

In terms of community participation in general, G. Cho (2000) investigated the competence and social relationships of Korean-American adults and found that high proficiency in Korean allowed more access to the ethnic community and that less proficiency resulted in isolation from this community. Among various types of community involvement, 60–80% of Korean-Americans are affiliated with a church, a higher percentage than any other Asian-American group except Filipinos (S. J. Shin, 2005, p. 57). Along with providing social and spiritual support, Korean ethnic churches function as a community to provide opportunities for authentic language use and development. That is, Korean churches function as a “haven” in which “Koreanness” is highly regarded and Korean language proficiency is needed to successfully participate in this ethnic network (Pak, 2003).

Trans-regional ties and attachment to the home country created through such conveyors of culture as media, popular culture, and the Internet also form a transnational community among Korean diasporas because of the shared immigrant histories and cultural commonalities (Okazaki & Saw, 2011). The trans-regional efforts by the ethnic community to enhance the status of the Korean language and to promulgate more opportunities for learning and maintenance in the American society are noteworthy. To list only a few of the Korean community’s current organized efforts, there have been Korean government-funded programs for overseas Korean-Americans to study Korean and teach English in Korea, six Korean education centers affiliated with Korean embassy

offices supporting community schools, language organizations and associations working to lobby with U.S. K–16 schools, and Korean government education policies for overseas Koreans (H. R. Cho, 2004). These trans-regional efforts have made possible the resourcefulness of Korean ethnic communities nationwide. Wiley states that “they have their own professional teacher training association and professional conferences, a professional journal, and receive considerable support from the South Korean government in the form of educational language materials” (as cited in Carreira & Kagan, 2011, p. 53).

Research has demonstrated the critical role of relations and communication between family and community members for heritage language maintenance, structures that cannot be easily replaced by formal language learning settings. I have also argued that Korean education in the United States has been primarily left to immediate family members and communities, and accordingly, Korean education in the community has mainly been utilized by Korean HLs.

IV. The Status of Korean as a Heritage Language in the United States

The considerably fast loss of the heritage language among American-born Koreans is of great concern to the Korean community and to Korean educators. For instance, in Byon's (2008) study, only 16% of the heritage learners of Korean at a college reported that they had attended Korean community schools before, showing a high attrition rate between Korean community schools and college-level schools. In Lopez's (1996) study, only 22% of American-born ethnic Koreans were speaking the heritage language at home.

The following section aims to identify Korean learners' experiences and their perceptions of the language as related to motivation to maintain or disengage from heritage language learning. I believe that my review has established four main explanatory factors in terms of why Korean HLs decide to maintain or stop learning the language: (1) the vitality of Korean as supported by mainstream society and the K-16 educational system, (2) the vitality of Korean as supported by families and the ethnic community, (3) ethnic identity issues related to HLs' negotiation of complex linguistic and cultural realities between the two cultures, and (4) individuals' learning goals and backgrounds.

LANGUAGE VITALITY SUPPORTED BY THE K-16 EDUCATION SYSTEM

As is the case of most heritage language groups, even young, virtually monolingual Korean-speaking children quickly lose their mother language proficiency after schooling begins and speak mostly English, sometimes exclusively (Carreira & Kagan, 2011; Jeon, 2008; J. Lee & Kim, 2008; Oh, Jun, Knightly, & Au, 2003; S. J. Shin, 2005; Tse, 2001b).

The American school system generally operates on the basis of an English-only curriculum, policies, and standardized testing (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2010; S. J. Shin, 2006). In addition, several state-level policies have declared English as the official language of the state and endeavored to abolish bilingual education (S. Lee & Suarez, 2009). The low value placed on less commonly taught languages by teachers and administrators also negatively affects the teaching of foreign languages. For example, J. Lee and Oxelson's (2006) survey of K–12 teachers found that the majority had negative or indifferent attitudes toward heritage language maintenance and believed that their “job is to teach English and get them ready to graduate,” even with the enormous presence of heritage speakers in their classes. In this regard, Cummins (2005) describes the situation of FLE in the United States: “We are faced with the bizarre scenario of schools successfully transforming fluent speakers of foreign languages into monolingual English speakers, at the same time as they struggle, largely unsuccessfully, to transform English monolingual students into foreign language speakers” (p. 586).

Children quickly become aware of the low status of their native languages in relation to English in the school system. An increase in children's positive perceptions of the status of a heritage language as a result of educational support for the language has been found in many studies. Tse's (1998a) research review on children's attitudes toward their heritage languages indicates that the most positive attitudes and outcomes are found in those who find their home languages integrated into the “official” school curriculum, as compared to other heritage language programs provided by the community and the absence of bilingual education.

With the scant visibility and low prestige of the Korean language in American K–12 schools, it is no wonder that Korean-American children’s perception of Korean is that its linguistic status is relatively low compared to English and other major languages. For example, comments from the participants in J. Lee’s (2002) study are revealing. They commented that the lack of social recognition of Korean was the most significant factor hindering the participants’ motivation for maintaining their heritage language. When asked if a Korean class had been offered in their primary and secondary schools, they replied that “knowing that the subject is offered may make me feel a greater *respect for the language and culture*”; that “it would have shown me that Korean as a heritage is *much more accepted*”; and that “it would have given me *incentive and motivation* to learn Korean at an earlier age” (p.123, italics added). It appears that because Korean is essentially regarded as extracurricular and irrelevant to American K–12 education, HLs learn not to value the language as a legitimate subject of study. In this regard, researchers have suggested that the development of an AP Korean language program and awarding credit for extracurricular language study will foster the learners’ motivation and positive attitudes toward Korean language study at the K–12 level (S. Cho et al., 2006; J. Lee & Oxelson, 2006; J. Lee & Shin, 2008; J. Lee & Suarez, 2009; S. J. Shin, 2006; Wang & Green, 2001).

Fortunately, however, the inclusion of Korean as an SAT II subject has had positive effects on the maintenance of the language. As seen in the continuous increase in the number of examinees, J. Lee (2002) argues that interest and motivation have been “stimulated” among Korean-American college students. In addition, recently, Korean-

American students find more opportunity to study the language in their tertiary schools because “the university Korean program gave *legitimacy* to what was earlier considered *peripheral*” simply because no courses had been offered in earlier schools (Jeon, 2008, p. 66, italics added).

LANGUAGE VITALITY SUPPORTED BY THE COMMUNITY

Parental attitudes toward and support of the maintenance of Korean as a heritage language also play an important role in shaping HLs’ perceptions about the language vitality. Parents of heritage language learners generally have more positive attitudes toward foreign language learning than those of NHLs (Reynolds et al, 2009). In particular, F. Shin and Krashen’s (1998) comparison of six studies found that Korean parents had more positive attitudes toward bilingualism and lent more support for actual participation in heritage language programs than Spanish and Hmong parents.

However, in reality, Korean-American parents seem to be far more concerned about English acquisition than Korean acquisition. S. J. Shin (2005) found that parents’ expectations of children’s successful academic achievement and the poor advice about bilingualism given by ill-informed teachers, doctors, and speech therapists led the parents to be far more concerned about children’s English education, even though 82% of the parents responded that the ideal situation would be that their children be Korean-English bilinguals. In spite of this positive attitude, only a small number of these parents were actually teaching Korean at home or sending their children to Korean community schools. In addition, the more the parents were exposed to English, the more they were supportive of English monolingualism. Another study by S. J. Shin (2006) also found that

because Korean-American parents' main reason for immigration was for the education of their children, parents placed more emphasis on English for academic success. In fact, the only reason that many of them sent their children to community schools was their apprehension about their own miscommunications with their children.

Language practices and attitudes in immigrant families are also primarily associated with parents' lack of knowledge and misconceptions about bilingualism (Au & Oh, 2009; Campbell & Rosenthal, 2000; J. Lee & Suarez, 2009; M. Lee, 2000a; H. Sohn, 2005). For example, because of the belief that bilinguals should be able to speak both languages at native-like levels, Korean-American parents believe that being bilingual is a hindrance to English acquisition and overall academic achievement. However, research has found benefits in maintaining the heritage language and culture in terms of greater academic achievement, lower high school dropout rates, and better English acquisition (J. Lee & Suarez, 2009; S. Lee, 2002).

Moreover, in spite of the widespread presence of Korean community schools, the perceived stigma attached to the community schools works as a demotivating factor for students. For example, participants in J. Lee's (2002) study remarked that they were "not motivated to learn in an environment labeled 'supplementary,' because they feel it is not a necessary requirement to succeed in society or school" (p. 123). In addition, Korean educators and researchers have identified several impediments to sustained student motivation and efficient learning of Korean in community schools, including poor curriculum and instruction, lack of teacher quality and professional development, lack of appropriate resource materials, articulation problems between the community and public

schools, a lack of standardized guidelines in curriculum and assessment, and learning and teaching style mismatches. In fact, many participants in studies have commented on problematic instructional quality and methods and their negative experiences with and impressions of Korean community schools (Jeon, 2008; E. Kim, 2006; J. Lee, 2002; S. J. Shin, 2005).

LINGUISTIC IDENTITY AND ATTITUDES OF HERITAGE LEARNERS

Issues related to ethnic identity and attitude development are crucial to heritage language maintenance as they determine the degree of HLs' appreciation of or detachment from the heritage language, culture, and values. Tse's (1998b) model of ethnic identity formation describes the bidirectional relationships between identity formation and proficiency in the heritage language. It also illustrates that ambivalent or negative feelings toward the ethnic culture result in more assimilation with the dominant culture, whereas the emergence of a positive ethnic identity leads to a bicultural identity. Therefore, even worse than the low representation and recognition of heritage languages in mainstream society is the negative connotations and stigmas associated with minority languages and ethnic groups, factors that may further accelerate heritage language loss. Although HLs' perceptions of linguistic and ethnic stigmas sometimes motivate them to maintain their ethnic identity and language, they generally result in negative attitudes toward and distanced identification with their heritage (J. Lee & Suarez, 2009).

One pronounced characteristic of heritage language speakers is dual linguistic and cultural identity, which is sometimes called a hyphenated identity, as manifested in titles like "Korean-American." J. Lee's (2002) study of ethnic identity among Korean-

American college students found that Korean proficiency was strongly associated with a unique bicultural identity formed from both Korean and American cultures. About 90% of the participants reported experiencing a dual identity, and 73% agreed that bicultural and bilingual competence is important. H. Jo (2001) examined ethnic identity formation in the process of struggling with the native standards of both English and Korean and found very different results. The Korean-American college students were marginalized from both standards, being unable to completely assimilate to either. However, they created “the third space,” or hybrid identity and language expressions, by selectively incorporating the two languages and freely crossing the language boundaries. Against an assumption about a “simple correlation between ethnicity and heritage language proficiency” found in other studies, the researcher concluded that “becoming an English speaker does not necessarily mean the loss of ethnic identity, and that learning Korean does not necessarily lead to homogenous ethnic identity formation” (2001, p. 26). In sum, these two studies seem to demonstrate that heritage language maintenance is not necessarily detrimental to English but rather forms a unique bilingual and bicultural identity.

Several studies have found an interesting tendency of ethnic identity enactment to occur at later ages, making high school and college good settings in which to revisit the heritage language (Jeon, 2008; R. Kim, 2006; Kono & McGinnis, 2001; J. Lee, 2002; Reynolds et al., 2009; F. Shin & Krashen, 1998). The participants in these studies reported that as they reached college age, they started to connect more with their Koreanness and to feel more comfortable with Korean-American friends. These changes

resulted in a renewed interest in learning Korean during their college years. In addition, they no longer experienced pressure to acquire high English proficiency or had linguistic conflicts between English and Korean. Facilitated by the renewed appreciation of Korean and more interaction with Korean-Americans on college campuses, some participants even began associating the heritage language with their future careers and plans for traveling to Korea. It appears that a number of Korean-American college students experience a shift in their attitudes toward their ethnicity from negative or neutral opinions in early years toward positive feelings as they reach college age.

This interesting phenomenon of “relearning” or “revisiting” the ethnic language and culture during the college years is demonstrated in S. J. Shin’s (2005) anecdote about herself. S. J. Shin focused on the acquisition of perfect English during her early school years, but only later did she realize the importance of her own native language. Fortunately, this desire for relearning is partly attributable to increased accessibility to minority languages in colleges and universities than was possible during earlier school years in the United States. Related to the issues of relearning, research (Au & Oh, 2009; Oh et al., 2003) has documented that early childhood experiences with the heritage language can benefit the relearning of the language, at least with respect to phonology, for adult learners who are virtually monolingual speaking only English, compared with true novice learners of Korean.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN MOTIVATION, LEARNING GOALS, AND BACKGROUNDS

Generally speaking, a motivation to learn Korean is associated with higher levels of proficiency and higher use of Korean, and students with higher proficiency are more

serious about heritage language maintenance (E. Kim, 2006). Importantly, the issue of students' lack of motivation in Korean community schools has been of concern to Korean educators (Byon, 2008; Jeon, 2008; J. Lee, 2002; H. Sohn, 2000). It seems that younger HLs generally do not have a strong motivation to learn the language except when they are forced to attend the community schools by parents, and that stronger motivation to learn Korean, like the identity formation, is found among college students.

Learning a heritage language is different from learning a first or foreign/second language in that HLs and NHLs have fundamentally different motivations, learning goals, and amounts of language exposure and use. Based on the complicated linguistic experiences of the individual combined with perceived language vitality, motivations of HLs are generally more oriented toward personal reasons rather than academic or professional reasons than those of NHLs (G. Cho, Shin, & Krashen, 2004). In particular, Reynolds and his colleagues' (2009) comparative analysis of HLs and NHLs in general indicated that HLs had a much stronger learning goal of being highly fluent or reaching native-like proficiency, more intrinsic motivations for taking the course as an elective, less career-oriented motivations, and more integrative motivations with communicative and cultural learning goals than NHLs.

This general tendency is also found among Korean learners as a subgroup in a national-level survey of various HL groups (Carreira & Kagan, 2011). The top priority for Korean HLs in this study was fulfilling a language requirement, followed by other personal goals such as communicating with family and friends in the United States, connecting with cultural and linguistic roots, and communicating with family and friends

abroad; the professional goal was the least likely motivation. In a similar survey of learners of 13 foreign languages, including both HLs and NHLs (Thomas, 2010), Korean learners' instrumental motivation was the lowest percentage among their first choice responses as to why they were studying Korean, which was also the lowest among all the language groups. In addition, Korean learners showed the highest percentage in terms of reasons for communication and appreciation of ethnic identity and culture as their first choices and the highest indices in sentimental reasons such as heritage connection and positive experiences with the language in the past as their second choice responses.

Yang (2003) found variations in motivational orientation according to the language of study and heritage learner status among college students in a Midwestern university. Japanese and Korean students were strongly motivated by integrative orientation, unlike Chinese learners, who showed higher instrumental motivations. In addition, HLs were generally more motivated than NHLs, but NHLs were more motivated by pure linguistic and cultural interest than HLs. Among the three language groups, Korean learners were found to be the most strongly motivated. On top of the different motivations, HLs and NHLs also have different learning goals. HLs usually want to improve vocabulary and literacy skills, whereas NHLs want to learn aural and oral skills (Carreira & Kagan, 2011; J. Lee & Kim, 2008).

In addition to the different learning motivations depending on heritage status, Reynolds et al.'s (2009) survey demonstrated that wide individual differences existed even among HLs of 19 languages depending on prior heritage language exposure and use, prior language attainment, motivation, and learning goals. In particular, the tremendous

variation in proficiency among HLs is mostly attributable to individual HLs' differing degrees of native language acquisition, and this variation is expressed as the "continuum of native-like attainment," with L1 speakers and L2 speakers at each end and individual HLs positioned in between the two ends (Benmamoun, Montrul, & Polinsky, 2010, p. 81). A great variation in language proficiency and background is also found among the Korean HL group (Jo, 2001; King, 1998; Lee, 2000).

Korean HLs also have differing degrees of instrumental motivation depending on their region. For example, J. Lee and Kim's (2008) study of Korean college students on the East Coast found that the learners' perceptions of the low status of the language was related to their lowest school-related motivations being the fulfillment of a language requirement. However, the students had strong integrative motivations regardless of proficiency levels. In contrast, second-generation Korean learners in G. Cho's study (2000) seemed to have more instrumental reasons for being bilingual, presumably because of their close affinity to large Korean communities in Southern California. For example, a number of participants mentioned the professional advantages of studying Korean related to their future careers as well as the benefits of preserving a resource to help the Korean community.

Primarily due to institutional settings and funding issues, such a great heterogeneity of learner profiles is brought to the same Korean classroom in the American context, and this becomes a formidable obstacle to sustained motivations and successful learning for different types of learners. In other words, "one-size-fits-all instruction," to quote Carreira and Kagan (2011, p. 56), does not consider diverse proficiency levels, different

linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and different learning motivations and goals, factors that have been some of the greatest challenges in Korean education (King, 1998; C. Lee, 2000). As a result, less proficient students are often intimidated by more fluent speakers in the class, and the class is not useful to more fluent students, impeding further motivation among both higher and lower learners or HLs and NHLs (H. Jo, 2001; King, 1998; Yu, 2008). Also, solely language-based instruction is boring for HLs, who also may have cultural- and identity-related learning goals (Silva, 2007; Yu, 2008). Some Korean textbooks, basically developed for NHLs, are not suitable for the majority of Korean learners, that is, HLs (King, 1998; You, 2001).¹⁵

¹⁵ For a more detailed discussion of issues related to a Korean language classroom with both HLs and NHLs, see King, 1998; C. Lee, 2000; H. Lee, M. Lee, & Y. Cho (2008); J. Lee & Kim, 2008; J. Shin, 2009; Tse, 2001; You, 2001.

V. Discussion and Suggestions

THREE AGENTS IN LEARNING

The literature provided evidence of factors that either promote or hinder HLs' participation in the acquisition, reacquisition, development, or maintenance of the heritage language. This integrative review of the research, particularly in relation to learner motivation, has demonstrated the social nature of language learning experiences and, ultimately, Korean heritage language maintenance or attrition.

First, I attempted to describe the current state of Korean education in K–16 schools in the United States and within the Korean ethnic community and individual families by focusing on learning accessibility and ecological patterns of Korean language education in the country. The scant representation of Korean as a subject in American K–16 education has been compensated for, to an extent, by the more ample learning opportunities and resources available in the Korean community. However, both of the learning contexts would appear to have a unique function critical to the heritage language use, exposure, and maintenance. The “sanctioning” of the Korean language by the incorporation of more Korean courses into the regular school curriculum means heightened perceived language vitality and social status of the language. In contrast, the individual's interactions with family and community members are also critical for the intergenerational transmission of the heritage language, resulting in the attainment of high linguistic and cultural competence as well as healthy and constructive communication and relationships with community members.

HLs' motivation for learning Korean is particularly associated with diverse experiences about the language around the individual and the ethnic community because of the particular social context of American society. This review shows that heritage language maintenance is influenced by the perceived language vitality supported by learning availability and by language attitudes of both mainstream and community societies, the formation of an ethnic and linguistic identity essential to genuine and strong motivation, and the individual's motivations for engagement and learning goals.

In relation to the primary question posed at the beginning of this Report—that is, why Korean heritage students study Korean—I propose a conceptual model that illustrates the three learning agents involved in Korean learning and teaching: American K–16 education system, family and community, and the individual learner. The three agents are triangulated with bidirectional relationships to each other in the model. I propose that the two learning contexts function as an aggregate learning setting and two-sided lens through which the perceived language vitality and language learning experiences are shaped. In addition, all of the three agents play an important role in determining engagement in the heritage language. It is also argued that a macro look is indispensable in understanding the individual's motivation for language learning and development, particularly in the case of a heritage language. In other words, motivation for heritage language learning does not reside solely within the individual. It is also dynamically shaped and continuously changed by a multitude of various contextual and psychological experiences surrounding the individual.

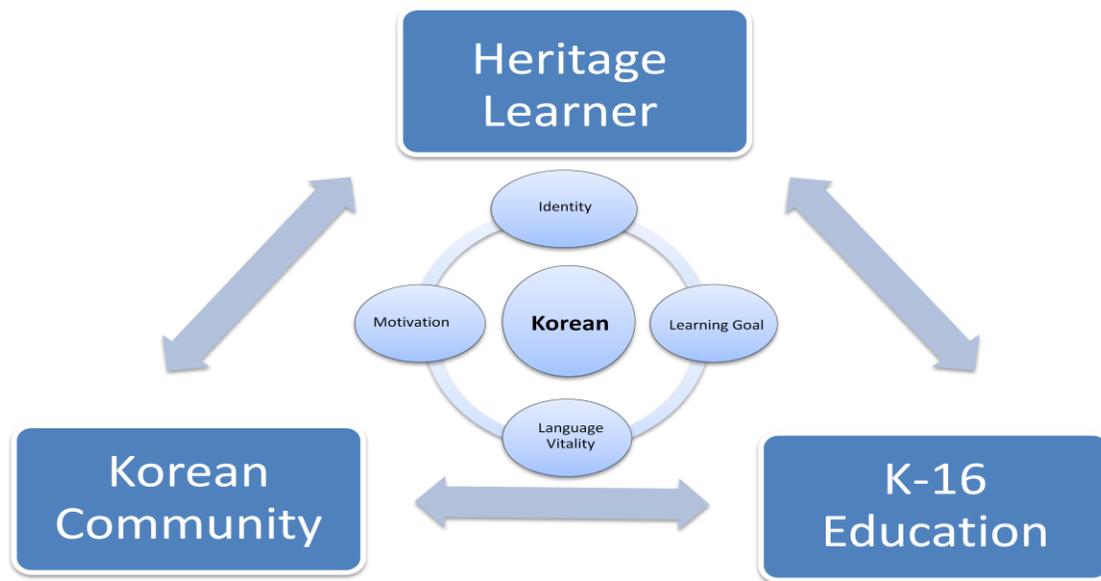


Figure 4. The three learning agents involved in Korean heritage language maintenance in the United States.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAINSTREAM AND COMMUNITY SOCIETIES

Based on the analysis of the current state of Korean education in the United States and the proposition of a model, this section maps out a set of recommendations to enhance learning opportunities and motivations for Korean learners. Schleicher and Everson argue that educators of less commonly taught languages must “become activists, as must educators of all foreign languages” (2006, p. 210). Likewise, I take a strong activist stance in providing this brief proposal for the stakeholders involved in Korean education, especially in relation to the issues discussed in the current Report.¹⁶ The

¹⁶ For a wider array of recommendations for heritage language education in general in the U.S. context, see ACTFL, 2010; Campbell & Rosenthal, 2000; S. Cho et al., 2006; E. Kim, 2005; Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011; Schleicher & Everson, 2006; Silva, 2007; H. Sohn, 2000, 2005; Steel et al., 2009.

essence of the following recommendations is that both educators and the heritage community must work together to promote Korean education in the United States:

- It is necessary to raise awareness among public school teachers and administrators regarding the critical and positive roles of heritage languages, including Korean, both to the students and to American society.
- Educating the ethnic community regarding bilingualism and the critical role of family, relatives, and community in teaching heritage languages, including Korean, is needed.
- Collaboration should be promoted in both the Korean community and the public school systems to provide increased incorporation of language study into the K–16 curriculum by providing more Korean courses, awarding credit for extracurricular study or through testing, including Korean as part of standardized tests, etc.
- Nationwide outreach and collaboration and networking among Korean educators should be promoted in order to arrive at consistent educational standards for Korean instruction and testing and to improve articulation between schools and class levels.
- Teacher training and professional development should be offered in local contexts to improve learner-appropriate materials and to design effective curriculum and instruction by attending to students’ linguistic and cultural needs.
- Korean-American children and students need to be educated regarding the

potential benefits of learning Korean.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This review of the literature has primarily focused on the social nature of the individual learner's experience in developing motivation for Korean study. The discussion of the current situation of Korean education in the United States has treated Korean solely as a heritage language, and the majority of the studies in this area are focused on college-level students. The research recommendations highlight a wide array of research topics related to learner motivation as they need to be explored in the interest of further growth in the nascent field of Korean education and research in the United States:

- Regular data collection and reporting on enrollments in Korean classes at all levels in order to monitor current trends as well as short- and long-term changes in Korean education in the United States and observation of these findings in relation to other foreign/heritage languages for systematic and coherent research and planning;
- Research on intra- and cross-linguistic factors, as they are expected to play critical roles in explaining low English proficiency in first-generation Koreans and the high language shift to English in second-generation Koreans;
- Research on younger learners in K–12 schools and adult learners not in K–16 schools such as Korean language and culture programs at Korean embassy offices;
- Research on non-heritage learners in K–16 schools and U.S. government

institutions such as the Defense Language Institute, the Foreign Service Institute, the Central Intelligence Agency, and so on;

- Research on the unique phenomenon of relearning the heritage language as adults;
- Research on the methodology of Korean teaching appropriate to learner needs, beliefs, and learning styles; and
- Research on national- and state-level education policies and funding issues influencing heritage language education.

VI. Conclusion

J. Lee and Suarez state that a heritage language is “a common thread that weaves throughout the tapestry of the development of the whole child” (2009, p. 152). Not only does the heritage language help ethnic identity formation, which is crucial to children’s relationships with their immediate communities, but it also works as a foundation for the personal and social growth of the child. However, at present, Korean-Americans are experiencing a huge loss of personal, community, and national resources owing to their desire to become completely monolingual English speakers, even though they have tremendous potential to achieve professional competency in the Korean language and culture. Quite simply, they are given little access to and public affirmation for learning the Korean language. As shown through the review, considerable support and reinforcement both from the family and ethnic community and from the larger American society and K–16 schools are desperately needed. When multilingualism and multiculturalism are valued by all of mainstream society, community, and the individual learner, Korean heritage language speakers can view their ethnic identity, culture, and language as crucial components of themselves. Collaboration from family, community, schools, and not least importantly, government, will best promote the preservation of Korean as a heritage language in the United States.

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